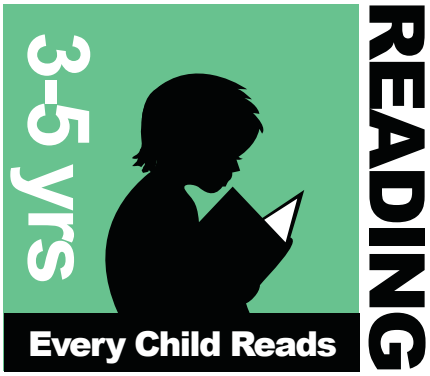
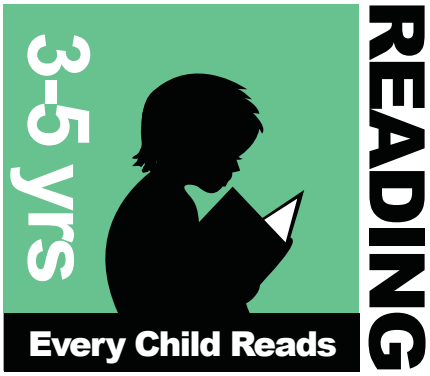


Iowa Department of Education

Concept Paper



Iowa Department of Education

Preschoolers

(ages 3 to 5 years)

PREPARING PRESCHOOLERS TO READ requires a set of critical skills. 'Getting ready to read' for 3- to 5-year-olds means that these children:

- know and understand many words,
- understand the basic content of the text, and
- use general knowledge about the world to bring meaning to the text.

Knowing and understanding many words and having an extensive vocabulary provides the background knowledge for understanding words read aloud from stories. Understanding the basic content or idea of the text means that children can identify story components such as the main idea, the characters, problems encountered, solutions, and so forth. Using general knowledge of the world, the child makes sense of the story, which increases understanding.

Stages of literacy development

It is important to understand the developmental continuum involved in learning to read. Knowledge of children's literacy development guides the adult's decisions about the types of literacy-rich experiences to plan throughout the day. Linder (1999) described six stages of literacy development, based on observations and review of research.

Stage one

Children in the first stage of literacy development learn about their environment by manipulating and exploring real objects in various ways. This level of development is referred to as sensorimotor or exploratory play. Providing children with experiences by reading books and pointing out pictures expands their language development (Linder, 1999).

Stage two

In the second stage of literacy development, children play with objects and toys in concrete and functional ways. This level of development is referred to as functional or relational play. Using storybooks enhances children's literacy skills, because children engage in play-like behaviors similar to the characters they read about in books. Children will often act out the actions of a storybook, nursery rhyme, or finger song. At this stage of literacy development, as books are being read aloud, children rely on pictures to tell the "story" or carry the message. They do not make the connection between the words on the page to the story being read. As children progress to the next level of literacy development, they begin to gain

an understanding that adults read the printed words on each page to tell the story (Linder, 1999). Repeatedly reading the same story helps children make this connection, learn the sequence of a story, and memorize words, phrases, and actions occurring in the story. Children at this stage are quick to point out a missed word to the reader!

Stage three

Children in the third stage of literacy development expand their level of play by engaging in pretend or symbolic play. They are able to imagine themselves as various characters and act out their role using props in creative ways. Children are able to pretend and elaborate on daily events as well as storybook concepts and themes. This level of play is referred to as symbolic or representational play (Linder, 1999). Adults may see children pick up a book and pretend to read the book to themselves and others. Children develop an understanding that written words are symbols for the ideas and thoughts contained in a book, that storybooks are read from left to right and from top to bottom, and that sounds and letters have a relationship. They know that print has meaning in their everyday lives, print carries a message, and pictures provide a clue to the written words. These concepts are reinforced when children have opportunities throughout the day to "reread" books, act out stories they have created, and pretend to read written words in the environment to themselves, friends, and adults.

Stage four

In the fourth stage of literacy development, children expand on their knowledge and understanding of literacy principles gained in the previous three stages. They increase their knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters representing the sounds, a written word that matches each spoken word, and words that "look" the same each time they are written (Linder, 1999). Children build a small sight-word vocabulary, use strategies such as memorizing the sequence of a story, and use the illustrations to enhance their ability to independently read and write.

Stage five

During the final two stages of literacy development, children enhance their skills as independent readers. At the fifth stage, children build upon the skills learned in the previous four stages of literacy development. They are able to apply problem-solving strategies such as using pictures as a cue when reading, and they increase their sight-word vocabulary and writing vocabulary. They become more fluent and able to read for meaning. Adults may need to provide support for children to apply the problem-solving reading strategies for recognizing unfamiliar words. Finally, during the sixth stage, children are considered independent readers. They are able to apply the problem-solving strategies to comprehend the story, and they will engage in silent reading.

Stage six

Children at the sixth stage of literacy development read with efficiency and fluency (Linder, 1999). Although many children will not achieve the final two stages of literacy development during their preschool years, it is important to know how the skills learned prior to school are the foundation for them to become independent readers and writers.

Reading principles

Three major principles have been identified to assist parents and teachers in facilitating the development of children's getting-ready-to-read skills prior to beginning kindergarten. The three principles are:

1) Children need to interact with books.

2) Children need to practice retelling stories from books.

3) Children need to understand that spoken language is made up of words, parts of words, and sounds in words (phonological awareness).

Principle 1

Children Need to Interact with Books

CHILDREN GET READY TO READ by interacting with books. If children are going to learn from interacting with books, books need to be read to children daily. Why is it important to read daily to children and provide storybook interaction opportunities? Reading aloud is a critical activity in helping children continuously gain vocabulary; it expands language skills that provide a foundation for later reading and writing skills in school.

> Of all the literacy experiences children can have during their preschool years, storybook reading seems to be the most powerful in helping them learn language and gain knowledge about the world (Schickedanz, 1999).

Benefits of reading

In addition to learning language and gaining background knowledge, reading provides other benefits. Stories tell about fact and fantasy of many different objects, animals, people, and interesting events. Listening to books about fact, fantasy, and adventures entices curiosity, builds a positive attitude toward reading, and enhances a strong desire to learn to read. Often, a warm interaction occurs between the adult and child during the reading of a storybook (Schickedanz, 1999), as both the reader and the listener brave an adventure or learn knowledge together. Also, reading aloud familiarizes the child with the language used in written books, which is not the same as language used in conversation. Sentences in books are usually complete, longer than the sentences used in conversations, and contain more describing words.

Interacting with books

Although reading to a child is important, reading aloud has the most benefit when the adult leads the child through an interaction with the book. Providing interaction opportunities with a book allows the child to actively engage in the reading process. Interactions with a book supports learning by engaging the child to actively listen because the adult may ask a question, pause for a word to complete a sentence, leave off a sound at the end of a word, or make a comment about the adventure/content of the book.

Two items should be considered when providing children opportunities to interact with storybooks. First, adults need to select books to read that are appropriate to children's developmental skills and interest level. Second, adults need to use strategies to create interactions with books that are appropriate for children's literacy development and language skills (Sulzby, 1985).

Two considerations for providing storybook interactions

1) Selection of appropriate books

Selecting appropriate book(s) for young children is important. Books provide a wonderful resource for children to mature from using single words, to phrases, to sentences, and into conversation. Children must have many opportunities to imitate the words they hear in books, not only to build language, but also to learn new vocabulary, concepts, and ideas. The characteristics of a book itself make a difference in the ease with which children pick up new words and ideas, or use language to retell a story. There are many suggestions to consider in selecting a book. However, only three primary suggestions will be reviewed here: the number of words per page, fiction and nonfiction books, and predictable text. Further considerations for selecting books are referenced in Appendix E.

a) Number of words per page

For young children, the adult should select books to read with few words or sentences per page. Books with few (two to three) words or sentences per page are easier for three- to four-year-old children to understand. A child is more likely to grasp the meaning of words written in one or two sentences compared with a full page of words. For example, books by author Eric Hill have one or two sentences per page about a familiar animal, a puppy. Simple sentences are used to convey the meaning of the puppy's (Spot's) problems or adventures. Later, as children's attention span and imagination expands, books may be selected with more words and sentences per page to expand the child's emerging literacy skill (Trelease, 1995).

b) Fiction and nonfiction books

Storybooks and books that tell about things or give facts are different. Research indicates that adults naturally stop and explain more when reading factual or informational books to children than when they read pretend stories (Moss, 1995). It is important to read both kinds of books to children. For example, a parent or teacher could read about a little red fish in the fiction book *Swimmy* (Lionni, 1963), and read facts about fish swimming in the ocean in the nonfiction book *Fish Faces* (Wu, 1993).

c) Books with predictable text

Some books are written with a style called 'predictable text.' Predictable text means the same word, phrase, or sentence is repeated over and over again throughout the storybook. The child can then predict the words the author is going to repeatedly use in the story. *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Martin, 1983) was written using predictable text. The story, or the pattern in the story, makes it very easy to remember and say again. For example, the predictable text is, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see? I see a _____ (name a color) _____ (name an animal) looking at me." Children as young as two and three are able to chime in saying the words.

Parents and teachers want children to chime in with words as the stories are read because this helps children use book language. Children who have experience with predictable text also begin to put several sentences together to talk about the same topic, which builds a foundation for later writing skills. If children cannot talk out loud for a short period of time on one topic and have it make sense, they will not be able to think about those things and write them down on paper. Children need to hear stories over and over so they can chime in while the adult reads and so they can later retell the story on their own.

The careful selection of books often entices the child's enjoyment of reading. Parents and teachers are encouraged to visit the public library to use the vast array of available resources. Librarians can always recommend a wealth of great books to read to children.

2) Strategies to create interactions with books

After a book has been selected, a variety of strategies can be used to create interactions with one child or several children while reading a story. Interestingly enough, the same strategies used to increase or expand language skills reviewed in the Language Module may be used with increasing story interactions for children in the Reading Module. The three strategies reviewed in the Language Module included using *before, during,* and *after* interactions with children.

Strategies to use BEFORE reading a storybook

Before reading a book, children need to have parents and teachers help them activate prior knowledge of people, places, and things. Also, the adult needs to help children build background knowledge to understand the story (Strong & North, 1996). Engaging the child in 'before' activities provides a warm-up time much like any physical activity such as pitching a ball or running a race. Rather than getting a pitching arm ready to pitch or legs ready to run, the child is getting his or her brain ready to think. Therefore, before a story is read to a child, the parent or teacher may prepare the child for reading a book using six strategies. See Table 1 for examples.

1) Read the title and author's name

Introduce the book by reading the title and author's name. Reading the title prepares the child to categorize the topic of the book. Naming the author helps the child understand writing as another part of reading.

2) Predict what will happen in the story

After reading the title and showing the cover of the book to the child, the adult may predict what the story is about or ask the child to predict what the story is about (Davey, 1983). The adult may need to model aloud his or her ideas for predicting what the story is about for younger children or for those needing more assistance.

3) Preview the story

The adult may choose to preview the story for the child just before reading the book to assist the child organizing prior knowledge. Previewing the story means giving a brief summary. Usually, the main character is named, the character's problem identified, and the character's attempt to solve the problem is portrayed as a question. See the example in Table 1. Previewing the book is a quick way to activate the child's existing knowledge and provides a 'hook' to guide the brain to listen.

4) Introduce vocabulary words

The adult should introduce any words that might be new to the children or that are critical to the meaning of the story. Once again, this facilitates comprehension during reading of the story. To introduce new words, the adult must first pre-read the story and determine if the children know the words, based on their background knowledge and language skills. Once new words are determined from pre-reading the book, the adult should define the new word(s) and briefly talk about similar words or experiences with the children before reading the story to them. The new vocabulary word(s) may be written on a card or large chart paper to link reading and writing and heighten children's awareness of printed words.

5) Connect the story to real-life experiences

Most everything in life has more meaning to people if they can connect the event to a personal life experience. The adult helps children to make this link by providing the opportunity to share his or her experiences. Adults may want to first model a personal experience and then ask the children to think of a real-life experience they, or someone they know, may have had.

6) Give children a reason to listen

Adults or children are more interested and willing to participate in activities and events if a reason is provided for the action. Increasing interest in a book is easily sparked, giving children a reason to listen. One method is to ask a probing question such as, "I wonder what will happen if…?" Another suggestion would be to name things to listen for in the story. Children will remain interested in the story if given a reason to listen.

TABLE 1
Strategies and examples to use BEFORE reading a book

BEFORE Reading a Book Strategies	Book Example: *Goodnight Moon*
1. Introduce the story title and author	"The name of this book is *Goodnight Moon.* The author, the person who wrote the book, is Margaret Wise Brown. The illustrator draws the pictures. The illustrator is Clement Hurd. The title or name of the book is very important because it tells us what the book is about. Listen: *Goodnight Moon."*
2. Predict what the story is about using the cover of the book	"Who can tell me what they think the story is about? (Pause.) To me, it looks like it is night time. The moon and stars are shining."
3. Preview the story	"This is the story of a little bunny who says 'Goodnight' before going to bed. He says goodnight to everything in his room. I wonder who he will say goodnight to in the story?"
4. Introduce vocabulary words	"Some of the things he says goodnight to may be new words for you. Let's talk about them. He says 'Goodnight, mush.' What is mush? Mush is a hot cereal like oatmeal. How many of you have ever eaten oatmeal? Here is a picture of the bowl of mush." (Point to the bowl of mush in the book. Point it out again when you read the story. Show a real bowl of oatmeal and even let children taste it!)
5. Connect the story to real-life experiences	"The little bunny says goodnight to many things. Do you say goodnight to people or things? Tell me who you say goodnight to at bedtime."
6. Give children a reason to listen	"Now, I am going to read the story. Listen to all the things the bunny says goodnight to in the story. After we read the story, we will try to remember and write them down."

Strategies to use DURING reading a storybook

As story readers, adults need to maintain the child's attention to enhance his or her ability to learn specific vocabulary, concepts, or relationships within the story (Strong and North, 1996). While reading books, parents and teachers often naturally employ many strategies, such as facial expressions, dramatic gestures, and a variety of high and low voices to signal certain meanings that help children understand stories. In addition, parents and teachers may use the following strategies to develop language and story knowledge while reading a book. See Table 2 for examples.

1) Point to pictures and words

Periodically pointing to important pictures and words helps to emphasize main ideas while reading the story. This assists children in focusing on vocabulary words and concentrating on the story. Also, directing the child to point to the picture or word will engage the child in active story listening. It is not necessary to point to pictures or words on every page since other strategies will be used during reading of the story, too.

2) Make predictions

Predicting what will happen in a story is another way a parent or teacher can monitor the child's understanding and engage the child in interaction while reading. Usually, the parent or teacher routinely turns the pages in the story being read — but, pausing before turning the page or pausing before reading the words provides an opportunity to ask the child to predict what will happen. Another suggestion to engage the child in making predictions is to begin reading the sentence, stop mid-sentence, and let the child finish the sentence with a prediction.

3) Ask questions

Asking children questions while reading a story helps children gain meaning of words and an understanding of book language (Norris, 1991). While it is true that asking too many questions can overwhelm and distract a child beyond the book

presentation, questions assure an easy method to check for story comprehension. Three different types of questions can be asked: yes/no, 'wh--,' or open-ended.

- Yes/no questions usually begin with words such as *is/are, do/does,* or *can/will/would/should*
- 'Wh' questions begin with the words *who, what, where,* or *when*
- Open-ended questions usually begin with the words *why, how,* or '*what will happen if…'*

The adult primarily needs to ask questions to point out important information in the story and to help children make inferences about the story events. For example, asking information about the colors of animals in the book *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* would be important to the story since every character is a different color. Asking about the color of objects or things in the book *Goodnight Moon* would not be as important since the meaning of the story is to say goodnight to the objects in the room. Naming colors of objects in this book may be more distracting to the meaning or content than helpful. Besides, the pages of some illustrations are gray!

4) Answer children's questions

Sometimes children ask questions as a book is read aloud. Answering children's questions about a story helps children get the most out of the story-reading experience (Schickedanz, 1999). Questions asked by children give adults the opportunity to immediately clarify a word or concept, which enhances story comprehension. However, questions can be distracting and cause children to lose interest reading the story. Depending on whether you are reading to one child or several children, the adult can answer the child's question briefly or save the question/answer for the end of the story. Recovering the story place is simple enough by re-reading the line read before the question was asked and continuing on with the text. Also, after the story is completed, ample time is available to expand the answer to the child's question. Refer to Appendix F for further suggestions to use during reading of stories to children.

TABLE 2
Strategies and examples to use DURING reading a book

DURING Reading a Book Strategies	Book Example: *Goodnight Moon*
1. Point to pictures	"And there were three little bears sitting on chairs." Point to all three bears to signify counting of one, two, three bears.
2. Make predictions	"Guess what the bunny will say goodnight to on this page?" or "How do you know the bunny went to sleep?"
3. Ask questions	**Adult says:** "Where is the bunny in the great green room? **Child responds:** "In the bed!"
4. Answer children's questions	**Child asks:** "What does mush taste like?" **Adult answers, with peer assistance:** "John, help us out. What did we say mush tastes like?"

Strategies to use AFTER reading a storybook

After a story has been read, activities need to be completed with the child to review his or her understanding of words, concepts, or new information. Extending the child's learning beyond the story helps reinforce concepts introduced during reading (Strong and North, 1996). Many strategies can be used after the story presentation to expand the child's comprehension. Three strategies will be specifically reviewed to focus on language interactions and story content: guided story questions, sentence completion, and relating the story to the child's experiences. See Table 3 for examples. Other strategies, such as using art activities or writing journals, may also be used, and these types of activities will be reviewed in the Writing Module.

1) Ask a series of guided questions

After the story has been read, parents or teachers can guide the child through a process of understanding the story from the beginning, middle, and end by asking questions where the child must recall facts and information. The adult can ask questions about important main ideas of the story or 'thinking questions,' with answers needing information synthesized from different ideas in the book (Raphael, 1984, 1986). Asking questions about the main idea would include naming the

characters, the time or place of the story, the character's problem at the beginning of the story, or the character's attempt to solve the problem. Asking questions to synthesize information from the story would include describing how the character solved the problem, why the character had the problem in the first place, or what the character could have done differently to not have the problem.

2) Use sentence completion activities

Children with skillful language can anticipate and predict the words needed to complete a sentence. This is an important skill for later reading success. Practicing sentence completion tasks in playful after-reading activities is a fun way to encourage this language development. Parents or adults may rely on the book to guide sentence completion or use their own story recall memory. Using the book, the adult would read a sentence from the page, not saying the last word. The child would complete the sentence with the correct word. Using memory, the adult would recall main ideas from the story, say the first words of a sentence, and let the child complete the sentence. The number of sentences completed by children will vary depending on their skills and interest level. If children cannot remember a word to complete a sentence, the following scaffolding (cues) may be provided:

- Give children a choice of two options or words to complete the sentence ("Was it morning or night?")
- Say the first sound of the word ("It was nnn…," and the child says 'night.')
- Describe the word ("One of the animals was something that says *meow.* It is a baby cat and rhymes with mitten. It was a ____," and the child says 'kitten.')

3) Relate story to child's experiences

It is important to talk with the child about the connections between the experiences in the book and the child's daily life. Stories have been found to give meaning to children as they make connections between the events in stories and their real world (Wells, 1986). Children should be encouraged to share their interpretations of the book as it relates to their real-life experiences. This will help them make sense of the book. For example, after reading the storybook, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (Viorst, 1976), a child may want to talk about times s/he felt the same way as the character in the story. When children share their thoughts about a story read aloud during a group activity, each child has a chance to confirm, extend, and refine their understanding of the story based on other's interpretations (Golden, Meiners, Lewis, 1992). Asking children to share their thoughts about a book helps the adult check each child's understanding. Also, it guides the child to purposefully reflect on the parts of the story s/he remembers.

TABLE 3
Strategies and examples to use AFTER reading a book

AFTER Reading a Book Strategies	Book Example: *Goodnight Moon*
1. Guided questions	**Adult says:** We just finished reading a story. What was the name of the story? Who was the most important character in this story? When did this story take place? At night, in the morning, or afternoon? Just before going to bed, the bunny said goodnight to many things in his room. Let's see how many of those things we can remember. You tell me and I will write them down. The bunny said goodnight to a lot of different things in his room. Why did he say goodnight to so many things?
2. Sentence completion	**Adult says:** Goodnight Moon was a story about a bunny who _____. There was a cow jumping over the _____. And there were three little bears sitting on _____. And a quiet old lady whispering _____.
3. Relate to child's environment	**Adult says:** Who or what do you say *goodnight* to?

It is important to remember that these strategies can be used with children in large groups, small groups, or individually at home or in early childhood settings. Storybook reading becomes an interactive sharing experience between parent or teacher and children. Teachers and parents intersperse opportunities for discussion as they share stories with children. The interaction between the adult and child is critical.

Leading children through before-, during-, and after-story activities may produce a few too many interactions or interruptions from some children. Information has been provided in Appendix G to guide excessive interactions from children while reading a book. It is important to remember: the first time a book is read, there may be many more interactions than when it is reread several times. Keep in mind: stories need to be read over and over many times. Children need to hear a story repeated many times before they gain a complete understanding. The more exposure children have to a narrative or the same narratives, the more they understand how stories are organized. Comprehension becomes easier because the child's sense of story organization improves with repeated readings of the same story (Schickedanz, 1999).

Principle 2

Children Need to Practice Re-telling Stories from Books

RE-TELLING STORIES IS AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY to garner active participation from a child. Re-telling stories helps a child develop comprehension, language skills, and an awareness of story structure (characters, problem/solution, episodes, etc.). Rather than recalling pieces of information in the teacher-posed question activity, the child has to recount story details in an organized sequential pattern (Morrow, 1989). The adult can provide a lot of cues, minimal cues, or no help.

A child develops story re-telling skills beginning with personal events, books, and, later, expository (information presented to instruct or explain) experiences (Hughes, McGillivray, and Schmidek, 1997). Each type of story-retell event evolves through a progression of a few words to many words and sentences. See Appendix H. Re-telling a story is not easy for children even though they have heard countless stories from many adults. However, story re-telling does become easier with practice. The following suggestions will help guide parents and teachers in developing book-story retelling skills in children.

Book-story retelling suggestions for children

If a parent or adult wants a child to re-tell a story after the child has heard the story from a book, the adult needs to prepare the child *before* reading the story.

Prepare the child to re-tell the story. Before reading the story, tell children to listen carefully since s/he will be asked to re-tell it (Morrow, 1989). For example, if the intent is to practice sequencing information, tell the child s/he will need to remember what happened at the beginning, middle, and end of the story. If the intent is to make inferences, the adult would tell the child to think of things that happened to them that are like the characters in the story.

Set the stage. Children will share less information and fewer details if they know the adult has heard the story or has just read the book (Morrow, 1989). Therefore, it is important to ask the child to re-tell the story as if the adult has never heard it

before. This sets the stage for the child to share as much information and language skill as possible. The adult could use the cue, "I just read the story (name of book). Please re-tell the story and pretend I have never heard it before!"

Use prompts (only if needed). Sometimes it is difficult to start telling a story (Morrow, 1989). It is acceptable to provide a word or phrase to help the child start re-telling a story. For example, the adult might suggest, "Once there was…," or "One day…." If the child has difficulty remembering a part of the story, ask, "What happened next?" or paraphrase the child's last sentence: "She ran through the forest and then…?"

Story re-tell activities

Children can be encouraged to re-tell stories with the following activities:

Flannel boards. Flannel board cut-outs provide an easy way for children to re-tell a story after the story has been read. Some companies sell popular stories with the flannel board cut-outs, or cut-outs can be made from materials on hand. The adult can provide assistance in the re-tell task by sequencing the needed cut-outs to begin. Later, allow children to select the cut-out(s), place it on the flannel board, and re-tell the story on their own.

Dramatic play. After the story has been read, provide props or objects to act out the story. Children enjoy playing dress-up and will practice many language skills re-telling the story with a few props. Don't forget to let children practice the big show with an audience!

'Pretend story' re-telling. Children benefit from using puppets, dolls, masks, or dress-up clothes to act out stories that have been read to them. At first, the adult must provide much encouragement and support, but soon children enjoy the activity and provide the story (Burns et al, 1999).

Let child read the story. Usually, the adult does the reading and the child does the listening. Turn the tables and encourage children to become the readers or the storytellers. The adult may have to begin by asking a question or making a comment. For example, in the story *The Napping House,* the adult could say, "There was a house, a napping house, where…." The child would respond, "Everyone was sleeping." After the child responds, rephrase his/her answer and expand on it by adding information. The adult might say, "Yes, everyone was sleeping. Who was sleeping on the bed first?" The child should respond, "A snoring granny, in a napping house, where everyone is sleeping." If the child is unable to continue and put several sentences together, proceed through the story, assisting in the same fashion (Burns, et. al., 1999).

Let child dictate stories. Children can dictate sentences or a story to the teacher or parent about a picture that they have drawn. The adult can write the sentence or story on the paper or attach it to the paper.

Principle 3

Spoken Language is Made Up of Words, Parts of Words, and Sounds in Words

IN THE LANGUAGE MODULE, we saw that language is the basic foundation for all literacy skills. However, sensitivity to small units of sound in the language (phonemic awareness) is essential for beginning reading and writing skills (Schickedanz, 1999).

Phonemic awareness

A child's level of sound (phonemic) awareness when beginning school is one of the strongest indicators that the child will successfully read (Adams, et.al, 1998). Research indicates there is "a strong relationship between early sound or phonemic awareness and later reading success" (Stanovich, 1986).

Phonological awareness

Phonemic awareness is part of a larger concept referred to as phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is knowing that language is made up of words, syllables, and sounds, and that these components can be manipulated (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). This means words, syllables, and sounds can all be taken apart, moved around, and put back together again in different ways. Children must acquire this awareness about words, syllables, and sounds to develop good reading and writing skills.

Phonics is different from either phonological or phonemic awareness. Phonics is a formal program relating to reading instruction. Phonics emphasizes how spellings are related to speech sounds in systematic ways (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Unfortunately, with phonics, some children have difficulty learning alphabet letter names and even more difficulty learning the sound families and exceptions to the rules. Many children are not able to perform phonics tasks until first grade, and some children are never able to perform these tasks. In contrast, children do not have to know any letter names to acquire sound (phonemic) awareness skills. Preschool children are able to perform many phonological and sound (phonemic) awareness tasks. Sound (phonemic) awareness skills can be taught easily. In the preschool years, developing sound or phonemic awareness skills does not seem to be dependent on participating in formal reading activities but rather from listening to patterned predictable texts, singing songs, and playing listening games.

Children are not born with phonological awareness skills and these skills do not develop with maturation alone. Sound (phonemic) awareness skills are learned by being involved in language activities that bring attention to the sounds and syllables of words. Sound (phonemic) awareness eludes an estimated 25 percent of middle-class first graders and many more from those of less literacy-rich backgrounds (Adams, 1990).

Awareness of words

Children first become aware that there are parts in spoken language by becoming aware of 'words.' Children develop an awareness that spoken language is made up of individual words quite early by focusing on the whole word for meaning. For example, when children hear "stop" or "no," they know to stop whatever they are doing. They are not thinking that there are four sounds in the word "stop" or that it ends in the 'p' sound. Very young children focus on the word meaning. To facilitate a child's development of awareness of words, children need to 'play' with word patterns, rhyming, and alliteration.

Word patterns. The easiest way to highlight word patterns for children is to use sentence completion while reading stories with predictive text or to point to repetitive types of words in the book. Predictable text means a word, phrase, or sentence is repeated over and over again throughout the book. Predictable text allows the child to anticipate the word pattern expected. For example, the adult would not say "see" in the sentence "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you ___ (see)?," allowing the child to complete the sentence. The awareness of words as separate units develops partly through exposure to print and visually seeing the spaces placed between the words in writing. (Awareness of words as separate units which relate to print will be reviewed in greater depth in the Writing Module.) Parents and teachers may point to the last word in sentences or to those words repeatedly used in a story. (In *Clifford, the Big Red Dog,* point to the words 'Clifford' or 'dog.')

Rhyming. Rhyming involves changing the last sound in a word to make another word. Children's first opportunity to hear rhymes might occur as early as infancy, as parents play 'Pat-a-Cake.' Nursery rhymes such as "Little Boy Blue," "Mary Had A Little Lamb," and "There Was An Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe" are perfect for introducing children to rhymes and building an awareness of whole words.

For many years parents and adults who interact with preschool children have been told it is important to read nursery rhymes. It is important also to help children say the nursery rhymes themselves. Adults may teach children to say nursery rhymes through sentence completion activities and by reading the rhyme often. In sentence completion activities, the adult might say, "Little Boy Blue, come blow your ____ (child answers horn). The sheep in the meadow, the cows in the ____ (child answers corn)." For added help, if needed, the adult can point to pictures as a cue for the child to give the correct word. Soon, the adult leaves out more and more of the sentence. "Little ___ (child answers Boy Blue), come ___ (child answers blow your horn)." Later, the child is able to say the entire nursery rhyme by him/herself.

Many books for preschoolers are written with rhymes so parents and teachers can keep this type of language flowing into children's ears throughout the preschool years. Books such as *One Duck Stuck, I Can't Said The Ant,* and the Dr. Seuss books provide children with opportunities to hear rhyming and gain awareness of the sounds of words as they change. Reading books over and over helps children

move beyond the basic meaning of the words in the story and start to hear the sound patterns in the words — that skill is *sound (phonemic) awareness.* Children who are able to move beyond the basic meaning of words and start to hear the sound patterns in words go on to become good readers and writers.

When adults read rhyming books to children, it is important that the rhyming words be pointed out. Adults should draw specific attention to the fact that the reason two words rhyme is that they sound the same at the end. For example, if you were reading *The Cat in the Hat,* you would say, *"Cat* and *hat* rhyme. Listen: c^at, h^at — 'at' and 'at' are the same. They rhyme. *Cat* and *hat* rhyme because they sound the same at the end."

Music can also be used to help children become aware of rhyming. *Down by the Bay* (Raffi, 1987) is a familiar song to many children and adults. In this song, rhyming questions are asked, such as, "Did you ever see a goose kissing a moose?" Most children love singing, and the rhyme makes this activity even more fun.

Alliteration. Alliteration means many words in the same sentence have the same beginning sound. Alliteration activities provide another opportunity for parents and teachers to assist children in the development of word awareness. Examples of alliteration and other miscellaneous activities follow.

Read books that display alliteration, such as *Alligator Arrived with Apples: A Potluck Alphabet Feast* (Dragonwagon, 1992). This book provides a variety of sound play and words. The pages are filled with sentences that have words that all begin with the same sound: "Bear brought banana bread, biscuits, and butter" or "Goose gave gravy, grapes, and gingerbread."

Take advantage of everyday activities to talk about words and sounds. For example, when you are at the grocery store buying fruit, you might say, "Today we are buying pears. Listen. Pear, pineapple, and peach. Do you hear that?" Say the words over and over in a little phrase such as, "**P**ear, **p**ineapple, **p**each. **P**ear, **p**ineapple, **p**each. Would you like a **p**ear, **p**ineapple, or **p**each? Shall we buy a **p**ear, **p**ineapple or **p**each?" In an early childhood setting, the teacher may say during lunch, "Here's a pretty purple pear. OOPS! We don't have purple pears to eat today… just pretty pears to eat today!"

In addition to word play, rhymes, and alliteration, word counting can be fun for children. Let the children count the number of words in a sentence you say. You can play this little game while you are doing chores, preparing a snack, reading a book, or washing hands. To count words in sentences, you may ask children to clap their hands, tap their laps, or pat their shoulders.
Segmenting compound words into two parts is another activity to highlight words to

children. For example, Adult says, “What two words do you hear in ‘cowboy’?” This is another great activity to help children become aware of words — taking them apart and putting them back together.

Awareness of parts of words

Children develop an awareness of syllables at about three to four years of age. This awareness develops mostly through rhyme, word play, songs, and as children try to imitate longer words adults say. For example, *computer* has three syllables, com-pu-ter; *water* has two syllables, wa-ter.

A syllable is a unit containing at least a consonant and a vowel, for example: wa-ter. A syllable is like a sound pulse of the voice (Adams, et. al., 1998). Awareness of syllables can be developed through sound blending or segmenting words. Research has shown that sound blending is the backbone of beginning reading skills (Yopp, 1992). Preschool children are able to listen to parts or sounds in words and put them together easily to make a word. For example, an adult might say, “Listen. Pock – et. What word is that?” It is best to put about a one-second pause in between the syllables or sounds. If children have trouble blending the parts together to make a word, take out the pause and just stretch out the word (p ahhhck - et). Begin with sound blending or segmenting two-syllable words. When children have mastered two-syllable sound blends, move to three syllables (com - pu - ter or tor - na - do). Other activities to encourage sound blending or syllable awareness follow.

Play The Puzzle Game. Give sound blending a special name. Tell the children you are going to play a game with words and you are going to make ‘puzzle words.’ Their job will be to listen to the puzzle pieces and put them back together to make words. Show the children a puzzle. Talk about the fact that a puzzle comes apart into pieces, and then it is back together to make a picture. Tell the children words are like that. Words can be taken apart into little pieces or ‘sounds’ and put back together to make words. To help make activities as concrete as possible, it is best to use common words that most preschool children know. Use pictures to represent the words because young children have trouble remembering words when they are trying a new activity. As the children become more skilled with the task, the pictures can be faded and only the spoken words can be used for the activities.

Play Mystery Bag. Put common objects or pictures inside a bag. Give children clues about one of the objects or pictures. Example: “It is a b [buh] - all.”

Play I Spy with objects that can be seen easily around the room, in stores, or while driving in the car. Example: “I spy a t [tuh] - oy.” Child blends sounds to guess word.

Play Name Games. Many of the games or songs that use names can be changed to use 'Puzzle Names.' Every child's name is special and holds a high level of interest with children. Tell each child their puzzle name. For names that have two and three syllables, break their names into parts (Dan - ny, E - liz - a - beth).

Who Stole the Cookies From the Cookie Jar?
Adult says, "Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar? Dan - ny stole the cookies from the cookie jar." Child recognizes name and raises hand.

The Name Game or *Clap Your Name*
Child says, "My name is "Dan - ny" (clapping with each syllable). Other children also clap on each syllable.

Puzzle Names can be used during activities that happen in all parts of the day (to line up, go to centers, turns for Show and Share). Before you know it, the children will be calling each other by their 'Puzzle Names.' At home, 'Puzzle Names' may be used for all members of the family and pets, too.

Singing. Sing the following song to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands." Adult then gives a puzzle word for children to sound-blend. Children whisper the puzzle word.

If you think you know the word, whisper it.
If you think you know the word, whisper it.
If you think you know the word, then tell me what you heard.
If you think you know the word, whisper it.

Ask Questions. We know it is important to ask questions while we are reading to children. If children are not able to answer a question, give them a clue or the answer in the form of a 'Puzzle Word.' Example: Adult asks, "Where did Corduroy and Lisa go in the story?" Child says, "I don't know." Adult says, "Here's a 'Puzzle Word' clue. They went to the laun - dro - mat."

Syllable Completion. Another activity to stimulate awareness of parts of words is syllable completion. The parent or teacher makes a statement or reads a sentence in a favorite book and omits a final syllable. The children must complete the word with the correct syllable. Example: Adult says, "Today we are going to make coo(kies) for our snack. We will mix them in our big green bowl and bake them in a hot o(ven)."

These are just a few activities that may be incorporated into a child's day. There are many more activities that can be used to stimulate awareness of parts of words or syllables.

Awareness of sounds in words (phonemic awareness)

Individual sound awareness (phonemic awareness) is the final area in the developmental sequence and the most difficult for children. Awareness of individual sounds develops easily in some children but is very difficult for other children. Many children do not develop this awareness until kindergarten or first grade. At about age five, children begin to be able to take sounds from words, compare the beginning and ending sounds, rhyme, and blend word parts together. Being aware of sounds in the spoken word is essential for reading and spelling because the letters printed on a page stand for sounds heard. The purpose of these activities is to let the children focus on sounds, not letters, in spoken words. Writing and naming of letters will be reviewed in the Writing Module.

Each of these activities will benefit children in their development of sound (phonemic) awareness. Sound (phonemic) awareness activities may take a few seconds, or not more than 15 or 20 minutes, and should fit within the context of the home or early childhood setting. That is, the sound (phonemic) awareness activity should relate to a book, a theme, a field trip, or a daily activity in which the children participate. The most important thing about doing these activities is to make them fun and playful.

Expect and allow for individual differences. Research on phonological awareness reveals tremendous variation among children at this age. See Appendix I: Development of Phonological Awareness. Some children will grasp the activities very quickly. Others will show an emerging understanding of the relationship between the sounds in the activities and their use in running speech. Finally, others will find the activities completely nonsensical but delightful. Do not make judgments about individual children based upon their ability to respond to these activities.

Because individual sound (phonemic) awareness skills develop around kindergarten to first grade, only three activities will be presented to enhance sound awareness skills for three- to five-year-old children.

Mix up sounds in songs and rhymes. A fun way to highlight sounds is to read rhyming words in stories with the incorrect sound. Children are delighted to correct adults, so give them time to shout out the sound in the word. For example, say the rhyme, “Jack and Jill went up the bill.” Stop reading and say, “B….” [“buh...”] (pause) “Bill. That’s not the right sound. Jack and Jill went up the _____.” (Children respond, “hhhill!”)

Odd-One-Out game. A game to play with children that focuses on beginning sounds is called ‘Odd One Out.’ Show children three pictures or three objects. If using pictures, make sure they do not have letters or words on them. Two of the objects or pictures need to start with the same sound. The third does not and

becomes the 'odd one out.' After hearing the word for each object, the children decide which one does not belong. For example, three objects could be a bird, a ball, and a spoon. The adult shows these objects to the child and says the name of each object. The child picks the one beginning with a different sound (the spoon) and sets it aside.

A variation of 'Odd One Out' is to provide three pictures or objects that begin with different sounds. Then, provide an object or picture that has the same sound as one of the first three. Name all four objects or pictures. Then ask the child, "Which one starts with the same sound as _____." The children find the match.

Play the Name Game. One song children enjoy singing is the 'Name Game' song. This song changes the beginning sound in each child's name as the focus of the verses. For instance, using the name *David,* the song goes like this:

David, David, Bo Bavid,
Fanna, Fanna, Fo Favid
Me Mi Mo Mavid
David!

Most, but not all, children like playing games with their names. Some children are very sensitive to having their name changed and/or being the center of attention. If a child is sensitive to this, it is okay to skip that child.

Appendix E

Additional Suggestions for Selecting Books to Read to Children

Select books that are familiar to the child

Selecting books that have familiar words and concepts is helpful to children's understanding of the written language used in books (book language). The language in books is not the same as language in conversation. Sentences in books are usually complete, longer than the ones used in conversation, and contain more describing words. Book language, especially, provides many opportunities to increase language skills. Therefore, selection of books is important to meet needs of the child. Children, just like adults, feel a sense of control and comfort in hearing familiar words and information. As an adult, if you are not familiar with a topic or information, you soon stop listening to the conversation or stop reading the material you picked up. Children do the same. In selecting books for children, it is important to review the words and information provided in the book prior to choosing it or reading it aloud. Previewing the book will help the adult consider whether the words are familiar or not for the child's social, cultural, and economic background.

Select books that contain illustrations to convey meaning of words and ideas clearly

Pictures in books contribute to the child's gaining meaning of new vocabulary, concepts, and ideas. The meaning of words is more likely to be understood if the book's pictures clearly illustrate the words and ideas in the story. For young children, true-to-life pictures make vocabulary easier to learn. (Example: The picture of a pink flamingo in the story, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* gives clear meaning to the new word *flamingo,* a bird not usually seen in Iowa.) However, older preschool children can capture the meaning in illustrations showing make-believe actions and illustrations with more detail (Machado, 1995). For example, older preschool children may enjoy the book *The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash* (Noble, 1980) to learn about a boa constrictor! Adults should read through a selected book and consider how the illustrations explain and coordinate with the written words in the book. This will help guide the selection process.

Select books with new words that are important to understanding the story

Word learning is at its best when the word is important to understanding the story. Learning a new word such as *curious* is easy in the book *Curious George,* since it describes the character's role so well. Understanding the word *curious* is important to understanding the story and the reason George gets into trouble so often.

Select books in which new words are used many times

The meaning of words is more likely to be understood if the words are used more than once in a book. For example, in the book *The Napping House,* many types of words are used throughout the story to describe the characters' sleeping, such as *snoring, dreaming, dozing,* and *snoozing.* The new words are repeatedly used throughout the story to indicate everyone is napping but in a different way.

Select books that have thematic units or ideas

Parents and teachers alike can select a daily, weekly, or monthly theme to guide activities, materials, and experiences for children to learn new concepts and vocabulary and to make connections with their background knowledge and life experiences. By incorporating storybooks, print materials, and literacy props into daily activities planned around thematic units or ideas, adults provide a physical environment that enriches children's play and literacy experiences (Schickedanz, 1999). The selection of books should illustrate the theme or idea and expand upon key vocabulary words, actions, and concepts being emphasized. The children's understanding of words, actions, and concepts in storybooks is enriched as they play with materials that build and expand upon the concepts presented in the book. Writing materials could also be available to draw a picture or write about the concepts the children are learning.

For example, a teacher may select a thematic unit around events occurring during a season. Linder (1999) suggests that a teacher or parent could read aloud the book *Picking Apples and Pumpkins* (Hutchings, 1994) to illustrate fall events. Plans could be made for a field trip to pick apples and pumpkins at an orchard, to ride on a hay wagon, or to make apple or pumpkin pies. In the science area or kitchen of a child's home, an apple could be cut to examine the core and seeds. Some parents and teachers can even cut stars from the apple core (cut through apple horizontally rather than vertically). The sensory area could have concrete examples of pumpkins and hay.

Books are an ideal way to generate thematic units and ideas to facilitate a child's interaction with a literacy-rich environment.

Appendix F

Suggestions to Use DURING Reading to Children

For very young children or children who have had very limited experiences with books, adults modify reading of storybooks so that the language sounds more like storytelling than a literal reading of the author's text. Sometimes adults change the wording of a story or explain what a word means as the story is read. See examples in the chart below.

Follow up on children's comments. Add explanations of children's comments or expand the child's comment using another word that means the same.

Demonstrate new words. The adult can demonstrate new words and allow children to imitate. In *Big Bird's Copycat Day,* pick a child and demonstrate the meaning of 'copy' or 'copycat.'

Read words as they sound. In *The Very Hungry Caterpillar,* read the word **pop** with a 'popping' sound. In *Corduroy,* read the word **crash** with a loud 'crashing' sound.

Show children real objects that carry meaning. In *Charlie Needs a New Cloak,* show children a cloak, berries to dye cloth, and a piece of red wool to touch and see. In *Corduroy,* show children a piece of green corduroy and let them feel the ridges in the cloth.

DURING Story Activity Suggestions	Examples
1. Follow up on children's comments	**Child says:** "I don't like mush!" **Adult answers:** "Mush is like oatmeal. I like oatmeal with brown sugar and raisins. Does anyone like oatmeal? Our little bunny liked oatmeal!"
2. Demonstrate new words	Let children try some nice warm oatmeal at snack time or breakfast.
3. Read words as they sound	**Adult says (whispering the words):** "And a quiet old lady who was whispering, 'Hush.'"
4. Show children real objects that carry meaning	Show real objects and say goodnight to the telephone, balloon, comb, brush, etc.

Appendix G

Suggestions to Handle Excessive Interruptions During Reading

Adults need to encourage comments, questions, and conversation during a story to help children gain meaning. But too many interruptions can interfere with the flow of the story.

Interruptions may be handled in the following ways.

Comment on child's statement

If the child says, "I saw a giraffe at my Grandma's zoo," the adult could respond, "You did? I think your giraffe probably had spots just like the one in our story." The child makes a statement and personalizes the story. The adult's comment brings in new information (on spots) and ends the interruption.

Ask a question about child's statement

The child may say, "That looks like a horse." The adult might respond, "That's right, but the zebra is a little different. Who can tell me how the zebra is different from a horse?" You allow the child to comment, bring in new information (comparing zebra to horse) to involve more children, and ask a question for the whole group.

Answer child's question about story

Child: "How did they get the tiger in that cage?" Adult says, "Good question. Who thinks they might know how the zoo keepers got the tiger in that cage?" Adult has positively reinforced the child's question, given children a chance to form new ideas, and encouraged a discussion.

End unrelated comments

Child: "I went to the store with my mom last night." Adult: "I'm glad you got to do that. We'll talk about the store later, John. Right now we are reading about the zoo." The adult has responded to the child in a positive way but leads attention back to the zoo story.

Continue story after too many questions or comments

Adult says, "You are really interested in this story. We need to go on or we won't be able to finish it. You will have time to learn more later. We will read this story many times."

Appendix H

Stages of Re-telling and Reading Stories

AGE	STAGE
12 - 18 months	A child's first attempt to retell what is actually in a book using 'book babble.' 'Book babble' is jabbering (as a child looks at a book) in a way that sounds very much like reading. The words are mainly nonsense words.
16 - 20 months	A toddler shows empathy for characters or situations depicted in books. Example: pretends to cry after being told that a character in a book is sad.
20 - 26 months	Child talks about the characters and events in storybooks, suggesting understanding of words read; relates events in books to his/her own experiences. (Schickedanz, 1999)
2-1/2 to 3 years	Child begins to notice details in books and comments on them; also recites whole phrases from favorite stories and may ask to 'read' books to the adult. Children who pretend to read at an early age are more likely to become successful readers later. (Burns et al, 1999)
3 to 5 years	Preschoolers' reading patterns: 1) The child relies on the pictures, not the print, to 'read' their stories. Reading consists of descriptions about the pictures but does not tell a story. Example: "The Little Red Hen has on a red dress." 2) The child uses the pictures to read the story, but it sounds more like talking than book language. Example: "First, planted seeds." 3) The child uses the pictures and the story sounds like book language. Example: "Once upon a time, there was a little red hen." The child uses the print to tell the story, and it sounds like a real story. (Sulzby, 1985)

Appendix I

Development of Phonological Awareness:
Awareness of Words, Parts of Words, and Sounds in Words

AGE	STAGE
3 years of age, children can typically...	• Say familiar rhymes (Mary had a little lamb) • Match rhyming words (*bake* rhymes with *cake*) • Recognize beginning sounds of words are the same (**f**uzzy **f**ox begin with 'f' sound)
4 years of age, children can typically...	• Segment syllables (rainbow has two parts to the word) • Count number of syllables in words (only 50% of children)
5 years of age, children can typically...	• Count number of syllables in words (90% of children) • Count sounds (phonemes) within words (less than 50% of children)
6 years of age, children can typically...	• Match beginning consonants of words (Mom and map begin with the same sound) • Blend two to three sounds (g - u - m makes the word 'gum') • Count sounds within words (70% of children) • Name rhyming words (*boat* rhymes with *coat*) • Divide words by onset and rhyme (first consonant or blend with the rest of the word, 'step' makes 'st - ep')
7 years of age, children can typically...	• Blend sounds to form words • Segment three to four sounds within words • Spell 'best guess' phonetically • Delete sounds from words (*dog* without the final 'g' is 'da')

Idea from Goldsworthy, C. (1998). *Sourcebook of phonological awareness activities in children's classic literature.* San Diego: Singular Publishing Group, Inc.

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